

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****October 12, 2021**

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SUBJECT: MANAGING ABANDONED SHOPPING CARTS

The purpose of this informal report is to provide general policy information on the management of abandoned shopping carts.

The use of shopping carts is essential for the purchase of goods inside of a store and delivery of purchased goods to a vehicle in a parking lot. After customers complete the purchase and delivery of the goods to a vehicle, they are expected to either return the cart to the store or a designated cart corral. Retailers do not want customers leaving with the carts because the carts are subsequently misused or abandoned. Examples include being dumped along roadways and waterways, converted for personal use, used by transients to transport belongings, etc. The loss of shopping carts requires retailers to hire contractors or use employees to drive about looking for carts to reduce cart replacement costs (\$300 - \$500/cart).

Several years ago, the City worked with local, regional and national retailers to improve their response to shopping carts that were being abandoned throughout the city. In response, some installed locking wheel devices that will lock one or more wheels when carts are pushed beyond a property boundary. This curtails removal of the cart from the premises. This greatly reduced the problem. However, not all retailers could afford these devices. As a secondary measure, the City and retailers developed an online search tool where residents and staff could report carts to the store manager, and the store would ensure a timely retrieval. In addition to locking wheel devices, this reduced much of the remaining problem. The tool can be accessed at: www.fortworthtexas.gov/shoppingcarts/ Residents can also report abandoned carts to the City Call Center at (817) 392-1234.

Code Compliance staff have observed an increase in the number of reports for abandoned shopping carts in recent months. It is possible that this is partially connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, as people have been working more from home and retail staffing levels have been low. While most of these reports have been resolved after notifying the appropriate retail store manager, staff are now having to reach out to corporate managers due to specific and repeated failures at the local level. Given this, staff are also working on another round of outreach to local, regional and national/corporate managers in an effort to improve both shopping cart retention at retail properties and cart retrieval initiated by retail store management without intervention by City staff or through resident complaints.

If you have any questions, please contact Brandon Bennett, Code Compliance Director at 817-392-6322.

David Cooke
City Manager